

# You Can Run, But You Can't Hide

Barbara Costella-Anderson

*A story of diligence for safety's sake.*

When I first arrived at the Lab in 1956, I worked in the Personnel Dosimetry Office, better known as the Film Badge Office. Film badges were the precursor to the dosimeters that we wear now. In those days, the film badges were worn separately from the security badges, and periodically, we had to go to every single building and change the film in every person's badge. We had what we thought was a pretty good system: in each building, there was a rack with hooks. The theory was that the employees would hang their badges on those hooks when they knew we were coming around, which was either once a month or once a week. If things went well, we would come by each office, take the badges off the hooks, take the old film out for processing, and put new film in the badges. The employee would then pick up their badge equipped with new film and wear it until the next time we came around.

Except that many times we'd arrive at the office and see that the badges were covered with dust. Nobody was wearing them. So we finally convinced the Laboratory to incorporate the film into a holder with your security badge, so you had to wear it. And that did work. But we still couldn't send the film badges to the employees through the mail. We had to go to every room in every building at this laboratory and find each employee. Well, people don't sit still, and there were about 2,000 employees by this time. So we would canvas every building, go down the halls, and into every room. But we still missed a lot of people, because, of course, people work different hours.

We finally resorted to catching people at the main gates, and some of the protective security officers pitched in and helped us. It's one thing to have a film badge employee tell you that you need to change your badge, and another to have an officer with a gun tell you.

## "It's Like a Family"

Adalia Loder, Roxanne Springer  
and Mary McInerney

*In the 1970s, the paper nightmare of payroll for thousands only served to bond this team together.*

Processing payroll in 1977 was a sight to behold. Every week, we received approximately 10,000 paper time-cards. We attempted to ensure we had received one for each employee at LLNL, Site 300, Nevada, and LBL.

The percent time for every salaried person was calculated manually. Pay for biweekly paid employees was automatically paid based on the time reported, but manually audited before issuing checks. There were nine payroll clerks for 10,000 employees.

Until 1997, we also processed employee insurances. We would enter enrollment forms into our computer, and

manually calculate and take retroactive deductions. Then, of course, we had to manually audit everything. If people were on leave, we would write out bills for their insurances and track and submit payment to the insurance carriers.

There were a couple of years when Lab employees received a 1% salary increase retroactive to October 1. We looked up each person's gross pay for nine months and calculated the 1%, just so we could give the employee a \$47 raise.

We would be here until 9 or 10 o'clock at night paying out raises, but we had fun. We were such a close-knit family that everybody banded together and did whatever it took to get everything out on time. There has never been a better group of people.

The payroll checks arrived in alphabetical order. They would have to be sorted

in separate piles according to employee's requested distribution. It would take the entire office one full day to sort every single check.

The attitude of Lab employees also made our jobs much easier. That is one thing that has remained the same at the Lab: the people. They are patient. They are friendly. And dealing with people's money can be really touchy, especially if a mistake has been made that is not in their favor. But for the most part, people are really nice. It's like a very large family.

Our work now requires a different skill level than it did 20 years ago, so there is always a new challenge to face. In some respects it's more difficult today because you're dealing with computers, and you have to think like a computer works.

Now after more than 25 years, we are looking forward to retirement.

# The 1987 Bomb Incident

Jon Teevan

*On November 28, 1987, a powerful bomb, placed under a car in the Sandia parking lot across the street from the Lab, exploded at 1:00 a.m. Fortunately no one was seriously injured in the blast, which damaged the Lab's Building 113. The perpetrator eventually turned himself in and served about four and a half months in jail.*

It was supposed to be just another long and quiet holiday weekend at the Laboratory back in November 1987. It was Friday night, the day after Thanksgiving, and I had just reported to work as a sergeant in the Protective Force Division. Shortly after midnight, I mentioned to the Operations Sergeant how boring it was and that I wished I had something to do. With that comment, I headed out the door to my patrol car so that I could make my rounds and pass the time until morning. At approximately 1:00 a.m., I decided to take a break. I pulled into a parking lot adjacent to Building 361 and exited my vehicle. I took one step and froze in place, as the night sky completely lit up, flashing brilliant colors of white, orange, and blue, immediately followed by a violent sound that could not be mistaken for anything

but a major explosion. I could even feel the pavement rolling beneath my feet from the power of the blast. I watched with awe and disbelief as a large mushroom-shaped plume of smoke rose rapidly into the atmosphere. In my mind, we were either under attack or a catastrophic accident had just occurred at the Laboratory.

I jumped into my vehicle and began responding toward the site of the incident. Additional radio reports indicated that a gas-tank on a car may have exploded; this actually comforted me somewhat, because I did not want to hear the word "bomb." As I approached the South Main Gate, I could see Laboratory Fire personnel responding through the gate and onto East Avenue.

But as I turned onto East Avenue, I realized that this was not an exploding gas tank, but indeed a bomb. The street looked like a war zone as burning debris and chunks of smoking metal littered the street. Power lines sparked above the street. There was a large crater in the ground, several vehicles destroyed, and broken windows in Buildings 212 and 113. The Post 113 Officer, who had initiated the duress alarm, had been thrown several yards through the air from the impact of the blast. Fortunately, he was not seriously injured.

What I remember the most from that night was the professionalism of the on-duty Laboratory employees. The Protective Force Officers responded tactically, secured the area, volunteered assistance, and communicated well with the public. There were maintenance workers who brought us barriers, floodlights, and anything we needed. And, of course, the Lab Fire Department was outstanding in its response and assistance. It was a great example of Laboratory employees working together during an uncertain and adverse environment.



Damage from bomb blast in the parking lot of Sandia National Laboratory. The bomb was placed underneath the car shown above.

